

OLD-TIME RELIGION

12 Fervent, Soul-Winning Sermons

By

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CHAPTER EIGHT

THE SADDEST WORD EVER SPOKEN BY OUR LORD

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"Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. And he spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repented, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repented.

And he said, A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had

compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry" (Luke 15:1-24).

Out of that Scripture we take this statement in the twenty-fourth verse, "**For this my son . . . was lost.**" And out of that statement I would like to take one word, "**lost.**" Lost! I say it is the saddest word that JESUS ever spoke.

In the very sound of the word when spoken, there is an unspeakable sadness and pathos. There is in the sound of the word an awful loneliness. Lost! Lost! Lost! And that is the word that JESUS chose to describe the condition of every person in this world who has not been Born Again and washed in His Blood.

Yes, He meant every person on earth;

- I care not who that person may be.
- I care not what his background may be.
- I care not what his character may be.
- I care not what his position may be.

He might be the pastor of this church, or the chairman of the deacons, or the best Sunday School teacher you have; if that person has not been Born Again and washed in the Blood of JESUS CHRIST, he is a lost soul!

He may be faithful to the church. He may be deeply religious, thoroughly orthodox and fundamental. When will people learn that there is a vast difference between religion and salvation?

He might be the man who recently flew from Chicago to Rome to be made a cardinal by the Pope of Rome, but if he has not been Born Again, he is lost. He might be the pope of Rome himself, or even the preacher standing in your pulpit, giving his very life to the preaching of the Gospel; if he has not been Born Again and washed in the Blood of CHRIST, he is a lost soul.

All men everywhere are lost without CHRIST.

You know, people do not believe that. Most church members do not believe it. Nearly everybody I know has an idea that if a person is good, he will go to Heaven. We even teach our children that. We tell them that if they are bad, the "bad man" will get them, but if they are good, some day they will be angels.

If you ask a child, and older people, too, what kind of people go to Heaven, every time they will tell you, "Good people." No, no. No! Only saved people go to Heaven. All the rest are lost.

"For there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," says the Word of the Lord (Romans 3:22, 23). It is written, **"There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one"** (Romans 3:10-12).

And in the nineteenth verse of that same third chapter of Romans, Paul said the law was given **"that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."**

That is why John said, **"The whole world lieth in wickedness"** (I John 5:19).

All are lost without JESUS CHRIST.

I. What Does It Mean to Be Lost?

1. All Are Under Condemnation.

First of all, according to GOD's Word, it means that every person in this world who has not been Born Again and washed in the Blood of JESUS CHRIST is even now under condemnation. For the Scriptures say, **"He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God"** (John 3:18).

That word "**condemned**" is a legal term, a court term, and GOD means by it that the case against every unsaved person has already come to trial, the evidence is already in, and the sentence has already been passed.

Did you ever sit in a court of our land where a person was on trial for his life? I have. I hope I never will again have the occasion to.

When I was a high school boy there was a young man being tried in our town for murder. The testimonies were all in and the lawyers had given their arguments. The judge had charged the jury and they had gone out to deliberate. The courtroom was packed to the doors. People sat there and waited and waited until the jury had reached its verdict and come back. When those twelve men filed into that courtroom, you could sense from the look on their faces that something awful was about to happen. When they came in and took their places in the jury box and the judge asked them if they had reached a verdict, the foreman of the jury stood with a slip of paper in his hand. He turned pale, his hand began to tremble, and that paper trembled like a leaf as he read with faltering voice, "We, the jury, find the defendant guilty as charged in the indictment."

We had heard the judge say before they went out, if the verdict read like that, "it will mean that this man will hang by the neck until he is dead."

And when that man read those words, I thought I would die. I cannot even begin to describe the scene in that courtroom. Over by the counsel table sat this young man's mother and sister. When those words were read, that old gray-haired mother sprang to her feet and screamed with a

broken heart, then fell in a dead faint on the floor.

The sister sprang to her feet and ran down the aisle of that courtroom and out the door, and as she went out she screamed, "My GOD, condemned!"

Everybody in that courtroom sobbed like broken-hearted children. I saw the sheriff come over and snap a pair of handcuffs on the hands of this young man. When those iron bracelets clicked and locked, it seemed to me that a death chill went through my whole body. Oh, I have said so many times since then, if it is that awful to witness the condemnation of a man to a physical death, what must it mean for a soul to be condemned of GOD!

It means that the sentence has already been passed, the verdict is already rendered, and only one heart beat stands between him and the day of execution-condemned already, and certain for Hell, unless he repents of his sin, believes on the Lord JESUS CHRIST and is Born Again.

2. All Are Under the Wrath of GOD.

What does it mean to be lost? Second, it means that every person who has not been saved is even now under the wrath of GOD. Hear the Word of GOD!

"He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36).

What does it mean for a soul to be under the wrath of GOD? I do not know. All I know is the picture GOD gives us in this Book. If you want a little glimpse of what it means for a soul to have the wrath of GOD abiding on him, read the sixth, eighth and ninth chapters of Revelation.

In the sixth chapter John said: "**And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.** [The whole universe is being shaken to pieces.] **And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;** And said to mountains and rocks, **Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"** (Revelation 6:12-17).

"He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

Read the ninth chapter of Revelation where John said, "**And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace.**"

He tells how they entered into the bodies of men to torment them, and men gnawed their tongues in anguish, "**And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.**"

The world becomes a veritable madhouse. The wrath of GOD is being poured out upon ungodly men. "**He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.**"

3. All Are Under the Curse of GOD.

What does it mean to be lost? Listen again. It means that that soul is even now under the curse of GOD. "**For it is written, Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them**" (Galatians 3:10).

Every soul that lives today without salvation in JESUS CHRIST is even now under the curse of GOD. What does it mean to be under the curse of GOD? Again I say, I do not know. But I know that one day when JESUS and the disciples were going up to Jerusalem, they passed a fig tree. JESUS was hungry, and went out looking for fruit, and there was none. Then JESUS placed on that fig tree the curse of GOD, and turned and walked away. And in a few hours, when they came back, His disciples marveled to find that that fig tree had withered from the topmost branch to the roots, under the curse of GOD.

Oh, my friends, try to conceive of a soul, withering and dying, blighted by the curse of GOD, throughout an endless eternity! That is what it means to be lost.

II. Three Reasons Why All Are Lost Who Are Without CHRIST

1. People Are Lost Because of What They Are.

Why are people lost? They are lost on three counts. So many people think that a person is lost only if he does certain things such as live a wicked, ungodly life. That, however, is not the only basis of judgment. People are lost, first of all, because of what they are.

GOD's Word teaches that we are all by nature the children of wrath (Ephesians 2:3). Listen again to the Word of GOD in Psalm 51:5, "**Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.**" The psalmist does not mean that there was sin connected with the act of his mother's conception, or in bearing him, but that he came into this world with a sinful nature.

Listen again. "**The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?**" (Jeremiah 17:9).

I say, men are lost because of what they are - fallen creatures, sinners by nature, aliens to GOD, strangers to grace, without GOD, and without hope. That is the condition of this whole world today.

2. All Are Lost Because All Have Sinned.

And the next thing, men are lost not only because of what they are; they are lost because of what they have done.

Every person in this world is a sinner and knows that he is. There is not a person on earth who would dare to look his fellow man in the face and say, "I have not sinned. I am not guilty." If you would not have the courage to look your fellow man in the face and claim to be without sin, who would have the nerve to look GOD in the face and dare to try to claim that he was without sin? No, we are sinners and we know it. There is no use to dodge it or try to deny it. There is no need to try to justify it by hiding behind the hypocrites in the church. People are in sin, and they know it. We are sinners by nature, sinners by choice, and sinners by practice.

3. Men Are Lost Because of What They Have Not Done.

Then, the third reason men are lost is because of what they have not done. JESUS said, "**He that believeth not is condemned already**" - not because of what he has done, but listen - "**because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.**"

When Paul writes of the coming of CHRIST to the Thessalonians, he says, "**And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.**"

Here again, there is judgment and vengeance because of what they have not done. It is upon "**them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel.**"

When Deborah and Barak conquered the armies of Sisera, they came back rejoicing and singing the songs of the victor. But if you will listen, you will hear a discordant note. In the midst of their shouting and singing, you hear a curse being pronounced - "**Curse ye Meroz.**" What did they do? They did not join the enemy. They did not take up arms against their brethren. But listen to the Word of GOD. "**Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, . . . because they come not to the help of the Lord . . . against the mighty**" (Judges 5:23).

They were cursed because of what they failed to do. Men are lost because they have not believed on the Lord JESUS CHRIST.

III. Three Reasons Why People Land in Hell

1. People Are Lost Because of Their Heedlessness.

Another thing this parable teaches is that there are at least three ways that people are eternally lost.

The first way is illustrated by the lost sheep. The lost sheep did not intend to be lost. It is not the nature of a sheep to leave the fold or the flock. That sheep was lost because of his heedlessness, his thoughtlessness, his carelessness. The world is full of people tonight who are on their way to Hell, fully intending to go to Heaven some day. You ask any person who believes the Bible and

he will tell you that he intends to go to Heaven. They intend to be saved some day. Not one of them is planning to go to Hell. But Hell is full and running over with people who intended to go to Heaven.

None of you intend to spend eternity in Hell. But people put off the matter of their salvation. They get occupied with something else. Little by little the sheep gets away from the shepherd and the flock. He sees a bunch of green grass over there that looks inviting, and he runs over to nibble it. That is the way people do. The world is inviting. The pull of the world is on every hand. The Devil holds out a nice little juicy looking bunch of grass and they go after it.

"Everybody seems to be having a good time," they say, "so why shouldn't I?" So they go over to nibble that. And then the Devil shows them another. And then they say, "Well, there is no harm in just a little fun," and they go take another. And little by little, as they move along, trying this bunch and that, with no thought of being lost, no thought of going to the Devil - intending all the time to settle the matter with GOD and go to Heaven someday - but the first thing you know, the little lamb looks out and the flock is gone, and the shepherd is gone, and the lamb is lost. He is in the clutches of a wolf, or he has fallen over a cliff. And he is gone.

Brother, there is not anyone on earth that ever intended to go to the dogs. There is not anybody on earth that ever intended to go bad. But it happens little by little. No man ever turned his back on GOD all at once. No man ever went to Hell all at once. No man ever went to Hell in one leap. Heedlessness, carelessness, thoughtlessness and procrastination are the things that land most people in Hell who go there.

2. Many Go to Hell Through the Fault of Someone Else.

Then there is another crowd represented by the lost coin.

I submit to you this: The coin did not lose itself. It could not. Someone else was to blame.

- I have seen mothers and fathers send their own children to Hell by their carelessness and their indifference.
- I have seen mothers and fathers responsible for the damnation of their children through their own loose worldly lives.

I want to tell you, in a day like this, if you do not want your children to go to Hell, Mother and Father, you have to stay mighty close to GOD and the church.

For there are ten thousand pulls upon those children to lead them to Hell. And you have to stay mighty close to the Lord. You cannot afford to let down anywhere. I have seen mothers and fathers responsible for the damnation of their children because Mother and Father had an idea that their boy and girl had to be popular. I tell you, there are a lot of things that can happen to your boys and girls that are a million times worse than a little unpopularity. But there are so many mothers and fathers that just cannot stand for their children to be left out.

I would a thousand times rather they would be left out from the companionship and society of this world than to be left out of Heaven some day. And those mothers and fathers are not only

responsible for the eternal damnation of their children, but hear me! They will live to see the day when they would give ten thousand worlds if they could put them back in their innocence and purity once again in this life; if they could save them from the wreck and the ruin, the shame and the disgrace that has come upon them.

Listen! What does this world have to offer a Christian; what does it have to offer anybody that is worth forfeiting the soul for? Oh, why do not we think things through!

Then there are many people who will go to Hell stumbling over inconsistent church members.

People are going to Hell by the millions just that way - stumbling over inconsistent church members! They see their lives. They hear their talk. They see where they go. They see that they are no different from anybody else.

I know there are church members that dance. "I don't think there is any harm in going to those places," you say. Remember, my friend, unsaved people are watching you. Don't you take them to Hell! Where one of them has ever read a word in the Bible, there are a thousand of them who know no Bible except you. They see you where you go and what you do and how you act, and they turn away from the church and turn away from CHRIST in disgust. Don't tell me I do not know what I am talking about. I deal with them every day of my life. They say to me, "I know a lot of church members who do things that I wouldn't do." When they tell me that, it breaks my heart. I just have to hang my head in shame and walk off, because they are telling the truth and I know it. You cannot answer that.

Oh, you can say, "You are responsible to GOD for yourself," but down deep in your heart you know you are not getting anywhere with them. The hardest task anybody ever had is to win unsaved people over a crowd of ungodly church members.

Some time ago I asked the pastor for whom I was holding a meeting, "Brother, have you ever thought about why Paul could win so many more people to CHRIST than you and I can?"

He said, "No, I had never thought about it."

I said, "We are preaching the same Gospel that Paul preached. We have the same Holy Spirit that Paul had. And the Gospel has the same power today that it had in Paul's day. We have the same CHRIST to offer that Paul had. Why is it that Paul won his thousands where we win tens?"

I said, "I think I can tell you. Paul was preaching to people that had never seen a modern church member. I am preaching to people that are supposed to believe the Bible. I ought to win more to CHRIST than Paul, because I am preaching to people who already believe the Bible, while Paul preached to heathens of the rankest sort. But Paul did not have the millstone around his neck that you and I have. He didn't have to win his converts over a gang of ungodly church members."

Oh, listen, one day some church members will wake up and see somebody sent to Hell, somebody damned from the presence of GOD, somebody who, as he is cast away into the outer darkness, will point a damning finger at those church members, and say, "If you had lived as you

ought to have lived, I would have been a Christian. I stumbled over you into Hell!"

3. Some Deliberately Decide to Have a Fling and Land in Hell.

The third group who land in Hell are represented in this parable of the prodigal son.

Here is a young man who decided that he would have his fling. The Devil whispered, "You are young but once. The rest of the young people are having a good time, why not you?"

That pictures this young man exactly. '**Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me.** Let me have my fling.' Oh, my friend, have your fling, but remember this: pay day is coming. "**Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap**" (Galatians 6:7).

Look at the young man now. Everything is gone. He is down there in a hog pen, starving to death, ragged and dirty, and not a friend left in the world. Young man, young woman, that is the finished product of sin. Every road of sin you travel leads to just that. When you listen to the Devil that is what you will find down at the end of every road that you travel.

I care not how enticing it may look at the start, in the end you will find broken homes, broken bodies, broken hearts, crushed lives and blasted hopes.

Why can't people open their eyes and see? Why would anybody leave GOD out and follow the Devil instead?

IV. There Is a Way Back

But now, an encouraging word. Just as long as a person's will power is still on its throne, there is hope. Look at this fellow again, will you? See him sitting one morning.

He is sick. While on the hog pen fence he thinks of his home and the table loaded down with food. He is reaching down into the swill (for that is exactly what that word "**husks**" - means - the swill!)

He fishes a few crusts of bread out of the swill and stuffs it in his mouth. But he is thinking. I can hear him saying, 'I wish I were back home! Why, even the hired servants at home have all they want, and when they get up from the table food is left, and here I am starving to death. I wish I had never left home! Oh, I wish I were back home!'

But, brother, that is not getting him anywhere. The next morning he is back there on the hog pen fence again, stuffing his mouth with the swill. You know, if people could wish themselves into Heaven, everybody would go there.

But one morning this fellow comes to himself - he wakes up, in other words.

JESUS means to imply that he had been crazy; that he had been out of his head; that he hadn't been thinking straight. That was the trouble with him. And that is the trouble with everybody that

follows the Devil. They are not in their right mind. Nobody in a sound mind would follow the Devil instead of GOD.

JESUS plainly teaches us that all sin is a form of insanity. But this fellow comes to himself, thank the Lord. He wakes up. He is in his right mind. I see him straighten up and throw his shoulders back. He has a twinkle in his eye now; he has set his jaw, and there is determination written on his face.

I hear him say, **I will arise and go to my father**. I've had enough of this life. I've had enough of following the Devil. I'm going home!

I say again, you cannot wish yourself into salvation, but if you have the courage to break with the Devil, and set your face toward GOD and say, "**Lord, I will**" - Brother, you are on the way home to Glory when you do that! Lost! Lost! Lost! When by just one moment's decision, when by just one, "**I will**," you could be a child of GOD and on the way to Glory!

Now look for a moment at the next scene in this story.

When this poor wretched prodigal comes to himself, summons again his courage, puts his will into action, and turns his steps toward home, the old father sees him afar off, has compassion on him, runs to meet him and falls on his neck and kisses him.

That father has been waiting and longing for his return every day that he has been in the far country. Just so, unsaved friend, has GOD the Father been watching your every downward step as you have gone away from Him, and waiting, longing, pleading for your return.

Oh, lost soul, wake up! Come to yourself! Break with Satan! Break with sin! Quit the "**far country**." Turn your face toward JESUS CHRIST and say, "**Lord, I will**." And GOD the Father will run to meet you, to welcome you home, and the Lord JESUS will receive you, remove your garments of sin, clothe you in His own perfect righteousness, put the ring of sonship on your hand, and set you down at the Father's banquet table to feast your poor hungry soul on all the good things of GOD.

Again I say, Why will a person even take a chance on going to Hell when, in a moment, in the twinkle of an eye, when with one, "**I will**" to CHRIST from the heart, he could be a child of GOD.

~ end of chapter 8 ~

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